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MANUAL ON TYPOLOGIES AND ACTIVITIES OF RURAL ORGANIZATIONS IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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INTRODUCTION

1. "To foster participation and democratic development, the people and their organizations should ... establish autonomous grass-roots organizations to promote participatory self-reliant development and increase the output and productivity of the masses"[1].

2. The above quotation from the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development (Arusha Declaration) captures the essence of the thinking about rural development in the last decade of the twentieth century. This spirit is also evident in the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) when it declares: "As stated in the Khartoum Declaration, basic rights, individual freedom and democratic participation by the majority of the population are often lacking in Africa. This pervasive lack of democracy also makes mobilization and effective accountability difficult. This is one important sense in which Africa needs more democratic political structures in order to facilitate development"[2].

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

3. The gradual realization that development has to involve the beneficiaries at all stages has been a vital contributing factor to the advocacy of popular participation. On the one hand, it is based on high-minded ideas about democracy and participation, on the other, it is based on practical considerations of success in formulating a

viable development strategy. For a strong statement on the necessity of popular participation in development, we need turn no further than to the words of an eminent African personality: "The centrality of political power to the recovery and development process also means that we must find the best social locations of popular participation. These positions are in the State apparatus and civil society. The pervasive lack of democracy in Africa is also associated with the paralysing weakness of civil society - mass organizations, interest and social groups, local communities and individuals. Hence, effective popular participation in Africa should involve the urgent and deliberate strengthening of civil society in order to whittle down the large relative autonomy of the African State. This centres on the institutional building up of mass organizations - trade unions, peasant associations, co-operatives, women organizations, student unions, professional bodies, political parties, etc."[3]

4. It is, thus, widely recognized that popular participation is a prerequisite for the development of member States. The call for popular participation has grown even stronger in recent years, partly through the Conference on Popular Participation held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, in February 1990 from which the above-mentioned Charter emerged. In parallel, changes in Eastern Europe have played a part in bringing about a rethinking of the role of government even in other parts of the world. All seems to be pointing in the direction of more popular participation and democratization. Similarly, decades of development efforts in Africa have made it clear that the initial top-down approach to development, which expected a 'trickle-down effect' to benefit the people, has not brought about the hoped-for changes. Typically, projects which were initially successful often collapsed after their formal period was over because of lack of motivation, resources and manpower. It has been realized that this was only partially due to technical constraints. The major factor contributing to the lack of success was often the fact that the intended beneficiaries did not have a say in the formulation and implementation of the project. "It is no accident that the countries in which people's organizations and initiatives have shown the greatest vigour and energy are those characterized by the rule of law and freedom of expression and association"[4].

5. Despite a rapid rate of urbanization, the African continent is inhabited predominantly by people living in rural areas whose main occupation is agriculture. Thus, the development of the rural areas means development for the majority of the region's population. For various reasons, including lack of political influence, difficulty of access, lack of organization, etc., the rural population has not had the voice in the politics of the continent that would be commensurate with the overwhelming majority in sheer numbers that they command. Although the majority of the population is rural, it is the urban dwellers who have a disproportionately large share of access to services, political power, credit, financial and material resources and other benefits. One advantage of the urban population over the rural people is also the ease with which they can organize themselves, be it only because of geographic proximity.

6. It is recognized that strength comes from being organized into groups, having solidarity with one's fellow members, being co-operative rather than antagonistic or indifferent, and that from this springs power to produce changes which are to the benefit of a large group of people, at least in the immediate vicinity. The key to a greater degree of influence in one's life is co-operation with others who share the same interests, and for this purpose it is necessary to organize oneself into groups which can pursue these common interests.

7. These groups are manifestations of popular participation in development at the grass-roots level and, thus, form the basis for sustainable development. The success and sustainability of a development programme or project can be ensured only through the involvement of the beneficiaries themselves at all stages. There are numerous examples of projects which were technically successful as long as the outside donors and experts were involved but simply fell apart as soon as these were withdrawn. To avoid this syndrome, it is necessary to get the beneficiaries to participate from the outset, and this often involves organizing them into different types of groups which can be maintained by them even when the formal period of the project is over.

8. Besides the groups which are formed by the rural people themselves as the result of a project, there are also the groups which are formed spontaneously and voluntarily by the people, either based upon their own ideas or on a concept which proved to be successful in another community. Furthermore, there are those organizations, such as co-operatives, which are imposed upon the rural population, often as a result of government policy.

9. There are organizations which have various functions related to the rural sector, be it organizations based outside the rural areas or organizations created by the rural people themselves. Such organizations fulfil certain functions to the benefit of the rural populations. One can divide them first by location, i.e., either based in the rural areas themselves, based in urban areas or based outside the country altogether, as in the case of international organizations with headquarters in another country. The aims of the organizations can be divided into various categories which will be described in more detail later.

10. In order to develop the rural areas, it is necessary to have the full participation of the rural people themselves. For this purpose, the people must feel that they have a voice in their own destiny. Much has been made of popular participation in decision-making in recent years, and rightly so, as it represents a first and absolutely necessary step toward democratization of the development process. A seemingly small but nevertheless important step in the right direction is the organization of the rural people. Without organization, it is not possible to build the foundations of democracy on a larger, i.e., nation-wide scale. In this respect, rural organizations have a very important role to play in the establishment of democratic traditions. To be able to fulfil this task, the institutions must themselves be operated on the basis of democracy and participation by the rural people themselves. "Grass-roots participatory organizations may be regarded as foundations of a democratic society... Given their individual weaknesses, they [the poor] can exercise pressure and influence only by forming their own organizations"[5].

BASIS OF THE MANUAL

11. This manual is based on a desk study of the relevant literature on rural organizations, visits to international institutions such as FAO and, to regional organizations such as the FAO Regional Office in Accra.

12. In addition, questionnaires were sent to 13 researchers engaged for the project "Evaluation of Rural Development Experiences in Africa" who were requested to provide information on the rural organizations found in their countries.

13. The manual is limited by the unevenness and incompleteness of the available material on the organizations in the member States.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MANUAL

14. The objectives of this manual are to:

(i) provide a selection of the types of rural organizations found in Africa;

(ii) state their activities;

(iii) analyze them; and

(iv) make recommendations with the aim of using them to facilitating participatory rural development.

15. The purpose of this manual is also to provide a stimulus for the establishment of more such organizations. Furthermore, it should be able to provide a direction for policy-makers to follow in their attitude towards and dealings with rural organizations in their countries.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MANUAL

16. This manual consists of an introductory section which gives the basis of the study, its objectives and a definition of rural organization. The second section gives descriptions of selected rural organizations in Africa. Finally, the last section makes recommendations on the basis of the findings in the second section.

DEFINITION OF RURAL ORGANIZATION

17. There are numerous types of organizations which deal wholly or partly with the rural sector. Some of these are based in the rural areas, some are formed by the rural population itself, some are based in non-rural areas but send their staff out to the rural areas and some are found in both the rural and urban areas. The aim of this study is to deal with mainly those organizations which are based in the rural areas, and amongst these mainly those indigenous groupings which were formed by the rural people themselves. This eliminates organizations originating in foreign countries, at least those which are not from the region, though it might happen that one country adopted a type of organization which proved effective in another member State.

18. When defining a rural organization, it is not always easy to find criteria for distinguishing them:

a) from each other,
b) from organizations which operate mainly in urban areas, and
c) from organizations which are predominantly imposed on the rural areas from outside.

For example, youth organizations may operate both in urban and rural areas, as do women's organizations.- Some co-operatives are imposed on the rural population by the government while others are

formed by the rural people themselves for the sake of mutually beneficiary activities.

19. For the purposes of this publication, a rural organization is a body whose main functions are concerned with improving the lives of the rural population. They may be set up either by the rural people themselves or by outsiders, i.e., usually government authorities, or by a mixture of both.

20. The definition of a rural organization which is followed by The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is that they are the "people's own organizations, that is run and controlled by their members to a large extent"[6]. It is the composition of the membership and their duties, rights and functions which determine whether the organization can be considered a rural organization in the above sense. The criteria for a rural organization to be an expression of popular participation is that it is run by the members themselves. Furthermore, it is through this organization that the rural people should be able to improve their lives, by for example, acquiring or having access to better technology or by improving their means of production, by having easier access to credit or by improving their income.

21. One can differentiate two basic types, as defined by van Heck: standard organizations and participatory organizations. It should be noted that this distinction is descriptive, not prescriptive, i.e., it has emerged from empirical study of rural organizations world-wide, including five African countries, rather than theoretical considerations. The following criteria are used to distinguish the two types:

> "Standard organizations... usually have the following characteristics:
>
> (1) They are founded and sponsored by an outside, mostly government agency, with a top-bottom approach to development for the people, rather than a bottom-top approach. The idea is that benefits will trickle-down from above.

(2) They are more formal and official.

(3) Their set-up is inspired by alien concepts, principles and policies frequently imported from abroad.

(4) They are mostly elite-oriented and/or dominated with the result that the elite benefits more than others."[7]

"Participatory rural organizations usually share the following characteristics:

(1) They are started by the people themselves and not by a government or other outside agency.

(2) They are more informal and unofficial.

(3) They are more flexible in objectives and in set-up.

(4) Their leaders and their members are mainly the poor who reach decisions in face-to-face relationships. (The term group or grouping often is more appropriate than the term organization).

(5) Their activities are related to the day-to-day situation and needs of the rural poor. The latter, understandably, are more attracted to join and participate actively in these groups than the official ones."[8]

22. Another way to approach the definition of a rural organization is to divide them not into two categories, but according to the degree of outside involvement. This way of distinguishing types of rural organizations is based on the degree of government or outside involvement in the activities and support of the organization. Nevertheless, the basic duality remains, with some organizations having been set up by the local population while others are set up by outside agencies. The difference between an organization run by the local people and one which is dominated by outsiders will appear

once the decision-making and membership structure of a rural organization is analyzed.

23. According to Mutahaba, four different types of organizations of rural people can be distinguished:

(1) Total self-reliance: the community identifies the problem, organizes itself, decides on measures to be taken and implements them without outside assistance, whether financial, material or manpower. This is often of a temporary nature, but in some cases the organization takes on a permanent character, such as in the case of co-operative societies being formed.

(2) Self-reliance with outside assistance: As above, but due to the lack of resources the community must rely on outside assistance to complement local efforts, whether from the government or outside donor agencies.

(3) Government-instituted partial self-reliance: The government undertakes a development activity for the benefit of a rural community. The government provides part of the necessary inputs/funds, and the community is responsible for the other part.

(4) Government/donor implemented projects: Some rural development activities are carried out without the participation of the intended beneficiaries at any stage of the project. Much has been written about the prospects for sustainability of this type of project, as often the activities gradually cease after the formal project period is over, as the beneficiaries are: a) unable to maintain the activities for various reasons, and b) the beneficiaries will be dependent on outside help and continue to believe that rural development can only be carried out with outside help.[9]

TYPES AND ACTIVITIES OF RURAL ORGANIZATIONS

24. The types of rural organizations which are reviewed here were selected on the basis of their representativeness of groupings which are found throughout the region. A further criterion was their formation by the rural people themselves, although this has to be qualified by saying that in the case of some organizations, it is difficult to differentiate between outside influence and the input of the rural population itself. It is assumed that the reason for forming an organization or group in the rural areas, as well as in urban areas for that matter, is to improve one's standard of living, in a broad sense. A primary aim of forming an association of like-minded persons is the strength which is found in numbers. This strength can be applied to income-generating activities which could not have been carried out by individuals. Not only the potential material and financial benefits which emerge from forming a group are a factor in the desire to get together, but also the psychological satisfaction of having a voice in one's own destiny is an important aspect of group formation.

25. The rural organizations which will be dealt with in this paper can be divided into the following types:

Co-operatives
Self-help organizations
Traditional organizations
Peasant associations
Rural women's organization
Rural youth organizations
Rural trade unions
Credit institutions
Temporary groups

26. The distinctions between them is not clear-cut as some rural organizations might comprise more than one type of activity. Furthermore, the distinction between a rural and an urban organization cannot always be made due to the overlap between the

two as, for example, in the case of credit institutions which operate both in urban and rural areas. Some organizations might have been set up in both the cities and the countryside, while others are based solely in the rural sector. In this paper, it has been attempted to exclude the urban sector, despite the fact that there may be an urban equivalent or branch of the organization. There will be found a high degree of overlap between certain categories. For example, women are engaged in women's groups, as well as in co-operatives, credit unions and self-help groups. In some cases, one organization has various functions which make it difficult to categorize. A good example are the Nnoboa groups of Ghana, which could be categorized as either a traditional group, a self-help group, or even loosely as a type of co-operative. The groups which are difficult to put into one neat category are mentioned under the heading which seemed the most appropriate. It should further be noted that several types of groups can co-exist in one rural community.

27. Four broad types of group activities are defined by van Heck:

(i) Direct income-raising activities such as:

1. Improvement or intensification of food and cash crop production;

2. Development of small-scale animal husbandry activities;

3. Development of small-scale aquaculture and fishing;

4. Introduction and improvement of processing and storage facilities;

5. Introduction and improvement of irrigation, drainage and anti-erosion systems;

6. Creation of supply points for agricultural inputs;

7. Establishing utility stores for farming essentials and petty trading;

8. Production and marketing: handicrafts, cottage industries, carpentry, blacksmithing, charcoal making, household utensils, building materials, etc.

(ii) Income-enhancing activities such as:

1. Ensuring that inputs are received at favourable costs;

2. Ensuring that consumer goods are received at favourable prices;

3. Sharing or cutting of costs on social events;

4. Protection through a welfare fund or similar arrangement.

(iii) Production-facilitating actions such as:

1. creating the proper conditions for group production;

2. Consolidating holdings for joint production.

(iv) Socio-cultural group activities such as:

1. Health and sanitation, mother and child care, improved personal hygiene, latrine installation, water supply improvements, etc.

2. Education, e.g. literacy courses, family planning, cultural activities, etc.

3. Nutrition improvement: better food storage, food hygiene, clean water, better food preparation, improved stoves, etc.[10]

28. The formation of co-operatives, which are jointly owned by its members and the profits and products are shared, was once considered the best solution to the problem of rural development. While there are numerous examples of successful co-operatives, they have not always been able to provide a better standard of living of their members.

29. Co-operatives in Africa have met with varying degrees of success generally in direct relation to the government's attitude toward them.

30. "Rural co-operatives have been prominently associated with land reform programmes in northern Africa, and with production and exportation of certain major export crops (e.g. cocoa) in western Africa. In central Africa, co-operatives have not assumed an important role in rural development, while in parts of eastern Africa, they have been given special importance since independence and have been associated with objectives of social as well as economic development."[11]

31. The principles established by the Rochdale pioneers, which define a co-operative, were:

"(i) open membership,
(ii) democratic control,
(iii) limited interest in shares,
(iv) patronage rebates,
(v) goods to be sold at current market rate and for cash only,
(vi) neutrality in race, religion and politics,
(vii) sale of pure and unadulterated goods,
(viii) continuous education of members."[12]

These rules were established for consumer co-operatives but apply generally also for other types, such as marketing co-operatives. These ideas started to be imported into Africa at the beginning of the 20th century.

32. There are several types of co-operative. Some have a single main activity, such as selling their produce. The main types of single-purpose co-operatives in rural areas concerned with agricultural production are as follows:

"1. Producer co-operatives involving the joint farming of land and sharing of its produce or income from it;

2. Marketing co-operatives through which farmers collect, store, and sell their crops direct to wholesale buying outlets;

3. Supply co-operatives in which farmers join to acquire bulk supplies of inputs or to share ownership and use of water sources, equipment and other productive assets;

4. Processing co-operatives whose members jointly own generis, refineries, mills, canneries, and so on, required to process produce;

5. Credit and savings co-operatives through which farmers obtain seasonal or longer-term loans, normally for farming investment; and

6. Consumer co-operatives for bulk purchases and retail distribution of consumer goods."[13]

33. The functions of each may be combined in a multi-purpose co-operative, for example, the merging of a producer and a marketing co-operative, or the inclusion of credit facilities in a marketing co-operative, which is a common feature. In fact, in developing countries, co-operatives generally play the following role: (a) to protect and motivate members, (b) to train them, (c) to provide credit, and (d) to supply and market production.[14]

34. The problems which a farm workers' co-operative needs to solve are:

"(a) how to distribute daily work;

(b) how to motivate members to work earnestly;
(c) how to achieve effective management by insiders or outsiders;
(d) how to remunerate management;
(e) how to adapt to business cycles;
(f) how to obtain the services of specialists;
(g) how to pay advances;
(h) how to finally distribute net returns."[15]

35. Co-operatives, by their very nature, are participatory organizations, which are jointly owned by members who acquire shares in order to achieve the status of membership. The role of a co-operative is not only to provide a more rational and equitable means of production and resource distribution. It is also a vehicle for the fostering of solidarity amongst members. It can, furthermore, serve as a motivating agent for its members. The basis for the establishment of co-operatives is common action, mutual help and joint liability, and at least mutual responsibility.[16]

36. One major advantage of co-operatives over individual production and marketing, for example, is that economies of scale can be achieved. Furthermore, purchases can be made for the common good of the members, of for example, technologies which could not have been acquired by a small farmer acting on his own. These technologies can then be shared by the members of the co-operative. In the case of credit, the members can obtain credit from a revolving fund to make purchases which could otherwise not have been made.

37. An advantage of forming co-operatives is that the profits are shared by the members, rather than going into the pockets of only a few. This benefits the co-operative as a whole, because even those who were not able to produce or market enough to break even will not be suffering unduly as a result.

38. It is crucial that there is loyalty and solidarity among the members. Without this vital component, the viability of the enterprise will soon be in doubt. It is important that the members of the co-operative are not too divided by social standing, income levels,

interests, loyalties, etc. Homogeneity of interests and outlooks is the basis for success of a co-operative.

39. The problems encountered by co-operatives in rural Africa are various and worth noting. One basic consideration is that formalized co-operative societies based on the Rochdale principles are not indigenous to Africa, but have their origins outside the continent. Thus, one sometimes encounters the problem of the concept not fitting the local conditions in the region. As the concept was not native to the countries which adopted it, the intended beneficiaries often perceived co-operatives as a government-imposed institution, and that it was the government's responsibility and duty to ensure its proper functioning, rather than the people's own responsibility.

40. Furthermore, the introduction of co-operatives into traditional social systems which were organized along hierarchical lines or controlled by certain interest groups has not resulted in any significant reform or democratization. "In some cases, co-operatives have been established through... the very system of local patronage that should be reformed for the sake of development. The net effect in these cases is to hinder rather than to foster new local initiatives and structural change."[17] It has also been argued that in communities where traditional structures remain in place, there should be no imposition of alien organizations. "A utilization of traditional systems of co-operation is therefore possible only when the social structure is already changing and has lost its former full significance and importance. Otherwise, it can happen that all members of the co-operative are members of the same big family with its hierarchical structure."[18]

41. The reasons for an individual farmer to join a co-operative can be the following:

a) voluntary, as a response to public information or personal contacts with members of co-operatives;

b) due to pressures and inducements, such as:
   i) credit facilities;

ii) the fact that the co-operatives have a monopoly on e.g. marketing or supplies and non-membership means economic disadvantages;

iii) obligatory membership in order to receive land.

42. Pressure to join has been used mostly in state-sponsored or state-controlled co-operatives. The co-operatives were given a monopoly over the marketing of cash crops, which meant that the government was directly involved in the running of the co-operatives. This was justified by claiming that co-operatives would not have emerged without pressure from the government and rural development would as a result not have progressed. In some countries, such as Tanzania, co-operatives were seen as a means of promoting socialism and reducing the tendency toward economic class formation and conflicts of interest. It was attempted to avoid large capitalist farms which employ hired labourers and, thus, increase social and income inequalities.[19]

43. Several African governments saw the formation of co-operatives as a cure for the problems of providing the necessary services to the often widely dispersed inhabitants of rural areas, and as a means of providing them with a way to improve their standard of living. The problems encountered were often based on the fact that working in co-operatives involved changing a traditional pattern of life to a way which was not necessarily perceived as bringing any immediate advantage. Small farmers, contrary to popular belief, are realistic and not adverse to change, but also out of necessity need to be very careful about changes which could bring negative effects, particularly those which would affect an already low rate of production. One needs to add to this the above-mentioned perception that co-operatives are set up and run by the authorities from the urban areas rather than by the local community, and one can see why co-operatives were not always welcomed with open arms.

44. In some parts of Africa, co-operatives have been perceived as a means of preventing the formation of a landless labour class as can be found in a system having large commercial farms. "On the land settlement schemes in Kenya, there was no provision for agricultural

labourers or for 'squatters' (previous residents who had been employed on European farms but who were not among those allocated plots in the settlement schemes) to have membership in the co-operatives, and in some areas those excluded from the land reform must have been the majority of the population."[20]

45. Another major reason for the difficulties found in Africa was the attempt to use co-operatives to move straight from subsistence agriculture to highly specialized farming for export markets, without the intermediate stage of agricultural diversification,[21] and without ensuring the agricultural food production base.

46. The provision of credit is another important function of co-operatives and an inducement to membership. However, it often happens that the poorest among the members do not benefit from this facility as much as the members who are better off. Thus, the benefits of co-operatives do not always accrue to those who might be in the greatest need of them. Conversely, the farmers who did benefit from access to credit were often those who had less need for it.

47. In order to be an effective forum for popular participation at the local level, co-operatives must not be formed by imposing them from outside on the basis of the ideological flavour of the month. Also, they should not be formed simply for the ease of administration from outside. These approaches will in the end only serve to induce apathy, frustration and disappointment among the members.

48. The leadership of a co-operative is a vital component of its success. Mismanagement can have dire consequences, resulting in loss of enthusiasm by the members and loss of popular support.

49. "While policy-makers admitted that effective leadership was a scarce resource, the design of the co-operatives placed an enormous weight on leadership. This led to inefficiency or corruption, or both. Further, in regard to training, it was found that although there might be a very successful co-operative college, the graduates usually left the co-operatives to seek employment elsewhere. Consequently, the training did not actually benefit the primary level co-operatives."[22]

50. "Paradoxically, however, the community spirit of traditional Africa has not fostered this movement. On the contrary, the most educated or the most cunning members or employees of co-operatives have exploited the ignorance of members. The failure of the co-operative movement in Cameroon is, principally, due to the financial mismanagement of co-operatives. The State has stepped up the training of co-operative members and has set up co-operative unions closely supervised by public authorities."[23]

51. "[In Africa] the real decision-making powers as regards the general policies and functioning of the co-operatives tended to lie in the hands of government officials. The committee men often took considerable personal advantage of their positions. There were severe problems of financial abuse and mismanagement of co-operatives, accompanied by minimal participation of membership."[24]

52. The above statements point out some of the contradictions inherent in the co-operative movement in Africa. While we are advocating autonomy for the co-operatives, the State deems it necessary to have even greater control over the activities of the co-operatives in order to ensure that they are not mismanaged by their leadership and that they remain under government regulation. Furthermore, it clearly highlights the basic problem of co-operatives of inappropriate leadership and lack of education and training of the members. Also it shows that the tradition of working together has not contributed to the success of the co-operative movement, possibly because of the foreign origins of the concept and because of its misuse by the leadership. It is, therefore, vital that the leadership is competent and has a high sense of integrity and responsibility. The leadership must be as free as possible from political interference in the management of the co-operative. Therefore, the leadership should not be entrusted to political appointees, as this could be an invitation to misuse funds and power. It is here that the aspect of popular participation becomes vital. It should be, as far as possible, from the rank and file of the members themselves that the leadership is chosen, and this should be done in a democratic process. "The co-operative group, under the guidance of one or several opinion leaders, is able to influence the mentality and thinking of the individual members.

It can adapt the personal aims of members to the operational objectives declared and the general aims conceived by the group. All this is based on the assumption of voluntary membership; the situation is different when the new member is legally or otherwise compelled to join the group."[25]

53. Another handicap for co-operatives is often the lack of qualified personnel, especially in the accounting and other specialized managerial skills. It is in these areas that the government could provide assistance, at least until the necessary personnel can be trained.

54. Various problems are encountered particularly in this area. It is unfortunately often the case that the local community is not able to provide the skilled personnel which is required to run a co-operative, e.g., bookkeepers and managers who would be able to keep track of financial and administrative matters. Of course even a local person could use his leadership in the co-operative for personal or political gains, rather than for the benefit of the members of the co-operative society. The result would be either incompetent management or the imposition of an outsider to run the show. Both can be a blueprint for failure in the long run. Either the co-operative would be perceived as not providing more benefits than the farming of individual plots would, or the apathy of the members would grow in the face of what was perceived as outside domination.

55. Another danger which faces rural societies when co-operatives are formed, is that the members of the co-operatives become a sort of elite, to the detriment of the farmers who are not members. This can lead to the increase in income disparities in the rural areas. It would lead to conflict between the need for economic growth and the objective of egalitarian distribution of wealth.

56. Co-operatives can also face the internal dilemma of productivity vs. equality. If the better-off members take advantage of credit and new production methods, they might gain an economic advantage over the poorer members and, thus, increase the inequalities in the community. On the other hand, if the co-operative is too preoccupied

with equality, the productivity may suffer, and the members will end up sharing a low level of income.

57. There are, therefore, circumstances under which co-operatives should not be formed, such as when the farmers are sufficiently well-off as not to benefit from joint ownership. Also, if there is a danger of class conflict and the increase of income disparity, it may not be advisable to impose a co-operative on a community. It is also for these reasons that co-operative need to be formed only on the basis of the expressed will of the intended beneficiaries.

58. The government should limit itself to providing support in the form of loans, materials or other services, and not interfere in the actual formation process and the management of the co-operative society. Governments sometimes tend to see co-operatives only in terms of increasing productivity, rather than taking a more holistic view of their role as a vehicle for popular participation, social development and welfare. One way of getting around the problem of too much outside interference, is to, where possible, provide as many services as possible within the co-operative. This would mean in effect turning them into multi-purpose co-operative societies, handling production, marketing, credit and other services.

59. Furthermore, the education of the members is important for the success of the co-operative, and indeed for it to function autonomously. A membership which is informed and able to understand the functioning of the co-operative is less likely to be duped by the leadership.

60. Experiences in several member States can be used to illustrate the situation of co-operatives in the region.

61. The Tanzanian experience with co-operatives has been through various well-documented and often criticized stages, which however, give this country the advantage of a vast store of knowledge on the effects of certain policies on society and productivity, and the resultant problems. Tanzania's social experiment is valuable in the lessons it contains on the dos and don'ts of establishing and running co-operatives.

62. One reason for the development of co-operatives was the fact that the marketing of crops was monopolized by traders. The peasants, especially the rural elites, saw this as exploitation, and it was due to the desire to eliminate the middlemen that co-operatives were organized. At the time Tanzania got its independence, the co-operative societies and unions were operating independently and democratically. The primary societies were led by elected committee men who contracted the societies' employees. However, after attaining independence, the government made it a policy to establish co-operatives throughout the country. The result was that the co-operatives gradually started to lose their autonomy of action.[26]

63. In order to stem inefficiency and corruption and to have firmer control of the activities of the Local Government Administration and the Co-operative Union, the Tanzanian Government made "legal and administrative changes in the activities of these institutions that finally culminated in the dissolution of the Local Government Administration structure in 1972 and that of co-operative unions, by 1976."[27]

64. "At every level of this process, the objective was not to give more power to the ordinary members of these organizations in order to enable them to exercise greater control over the leadership but to increase the control and regulatory mechanisms of the State... One of the solutions that became obvious with the adoption of the 1968 co-operative reforms was more control of the co-operatives by the Registrar of Co-operatives."[28]

65. Although suggestions were made to decentralize and devolve the decision-making process and to make the structure less rigid and bureaucratic, power was actually concentrated by the Villages and Ujamaa Village Act of 1975. "This Act, by transforming all village governments into buying centres and by removing the regional co-operative unions, exposed the villages and peasants to the direct control of marketing parastatals."[29]

66. Experience showed that people were not satisfied with government control over the co-operatives and the marketing of their

produce, especially after the primary co-operative societies had been eliminated. Pressure was put on the government and in 1982 the co-operatives were reinstated, though with less freedom than in the pre-1966 days.[30]

67. "The control of the ruling Party over these institutions is not based on any clearly formulated policy that would emphasize the need for the majority of the members of these institutions - essentially small-holder men and women peasants to exercise control over these institutions. In most cases, leadership is dominated by influential petty-bourgeoisie, themselves carefully screened by the Party but with more alliance and allegiance to the petty-bourgeoisie in the party and government on the one hand, and influential and powerful rural elites - essentially big farmers on the other."[31]

68. In Kenya membership in co-operatives is limited to landowners, "which means about one million landless rural people are excluded. In fact, membership is made up of the more socially-advanced small-holders and the large-scale farmers, primarily because the credit policy of the coops excludes the small farmer. Although the coops are becoming stronger in Kenya, they still have a major obstacle, which is the functional conflict between the coops and the statutory marketing boards which have the monopoly to market most products."[32]

69. In Ghana, the co-operative movement consists of primary societies and secondary societies, or unions, at the regional and district level. There is very little democratic relationship between the two types. There are many constraints on the proper functioning of these primary co-operatives, such as lack of raw materials, working capital, equipment maintenance and credit, small size which makes it difficult to pay staff and improve incomes, weak management and organization, poor participation, poor bookkeeping, high illiteracy rates, poor meeting attendance and poor internal communication.[33]

70. In Cameroon, co-operatives are set up and run authoritatively, based on regulations imposed by the Bureau of Co-operatives and Credit Unions. The co-operatives president is also the Prefect of the

Department or another high authority. Cooperative Societies for Saving and Development were established, starting in 1975, for the purpose of increasing rural incomes, modernizing farming and infrastructures and encouraging savings. They provided training and credit facilities to farmers.

71. "The National Centre for Co-operative Development (CENADEC) is a public body operating in only two regions, the centre-south (cocoa) and the north-west (arab coffee area). It has formed 240 pre-co-operative groups in which farmers are trained and encouraged to form their own coops. It has the monopoly on produce marketing, so the membership is far from voluntary."[34]

72. In Somalia, co-operatives perform the following activities: fisheries, livestock raising, agriculture, transport and services, artisan, oil milling. There are group farms and multi-purpose co-operatives which comprise 2-3 villages, i.e. 1000-2000 people including group farm membership. Co-operatives have a chairman, a managing board, an accountant and an auditing committee. All officers are elected by the general meeting which is the supreme authority of a co-operative. Board membership numbers 3 to 11 depending on the size of the co-operative. The chairman and the management board represent the co-operative and act on its behalf in juridical and financial operations. They are also responsible for the organization of the production process, the daily work and the fulfilment of production and financial plans. It has happened that local authorities try to impose a chairman on the co-operative.

73. Farmers join the co-operatives because they are landless or short-term tenants. Membership in group farming has given many landless peasants access to land, and this may be the fundamental reason for its success. Co-operatives have also helped in stopping migration in search of work.[35]

74. In Senegal, membership in co-operatives is open to all rural people without discrimination as to sex or age. In actual practice only the chiefs of the larger families join. The co-operatives' presidents generally belong to the Unique Party and key functions are performed

by officers of the ONCAD (National Office of Co-operation and Assistance for development). "To illustrate the above, meetings' agendas are imposed by ONCAD and proceedings do not record the actual discussions as there are standard forms of minutes provided by Government."[36]

75. In Niger, the co-operatives are not registered and have no written statutes. Agreements are based on collective decisions and are only oral. "Membership is not individual but by a vote of at least three villages to enter as a bloc. Women are excluded. The coop has no social fund and no compulsory shares... Generally, leaders belong to the rural elite, but there is a tendency to limit their tenure to only two years and to elect young, trained men to replace them. The most important functions within the coops continue to be performed by the UNCC's (Union nigérienne de crédit et coopération) officers, thus the self-organization of the farmers is hampered." [37]

76. A study by an FAO consultant points out the main problems encountered by co-operatives in Africa which stand in the way of full participation and optimal utilization of the potential advantages this form of organization offers. The problems included the following:

1. The organizational set up of co-operatives is often imposed by law and governments are over-present;

2. Membership is usually open to everybody, but women and youth are, de facto, left out and mostly only the chiefs of extended families join the co-operatives;

3. In some countries, land ownership is a membership requirement, so that landless farmers and other rural poor are excluded from co-operatives;

4. Leaders and managers usually come from the more powerful and well-off social groups;

5. Most of the co-operatives favour the better-off and neglect the less prosperous members;

6. Training and educational activities for and of the co-operatives are restricted to the managers. There are hardly any training programmes for ordinary members;

7. Savings from operations and profits and hence investment and capital accumulation is not encouraged, hence a major means of development participation is omitted;

8. The above situation results in a very poor member participation. Members are not informed on the co-operatives' activities and meetings; frequently they join co-operatives only in order to get some benefit or on the suggestion of Government officials.[38]

7. A UNRISD study had the following to say about co-operatives: [There is] little basis on which to conclude that co-operatives are superior or inferior in general to other institutional means of promoting innovation and increase of productivity, such as a system of purely private initiative or farmer associations that do not operate on the classical co-operative principles. What seems important is the general quality of management of the co-operative, regular training of members and effective links with agricultural departments and institutes."[39]

78. Despite all of the above-mentioned problems and constraints, co-operatives can be successful in the region because of the important role they play in pooling limited resources, organizing people, teaching democratic skills and in development. They also can serve as a link between the rural people and the government.

79. It is necessary to fulfil the following criteria to ensure that a co-operative has the proper foundation for success:

a) It must be based on local initiative, have the support of the intended beneficiaries;

b) The members must be homogeneous in interests and class standing;

c) The leadership must be competent and be sensitive to the needs of the members;

d) It must have a degree of autonomy from outside interference which enables the members to participate in the decision-making process;

e) The government must be willing to provide inputs such as credit, extension services and auditing when necessary;

f) There must be a legal basis for the existence of autonomous co-operative societies;

g) Membership must be voluntary;

h) The aims of the co-operative must be in harmony and co-ordinated with national development goals;

i) Flexibility is vital in the management practices and policies. Rigid adherence to imported co-operative ideas can often be counterproductive.

80. Membership in a co-operative can, at best, be the source of pride, satisfaction and self-confidence, and thus, increases the self-esteem of members. Being part of a democratic organization and being able to participate in its decision-making process, however insignificant it might seem when seen from the outside, can make an enormous difference to people who were used to not having any say at all in the decisions affecting their lives because all decisions were imposed from outside by decree. As mentioned elsewhere, African rural societies traditionally had a decision-making process which involved the community to a certain extent, but the co-operatives provide a 'modern' counterpart which, if run properly, possibly can provide an even higher degree of participation.

SELF-HELP ASSOCIATIONS

81. 'Self-help' has become a catch-word for development, particularly the provision of basic needs, which is not only for the people but by the people. It implies that the beneficiaries are also the ones to provide at least the major part of the manpower, material resources and even ideas for a development project. This is a 'do-it-yourself' approach which attempts to use resources that are available locally as optimally as possible, particularly in providing basic needs.

82. The basic form of association, which has as its purpose the provision of these basic needs, is a group of volunteers whose tasks include planning, organization and carrying out the planned activities. To ensure success, they must be able to organize the community which is to benefit from the activities.

83. Self-help groups are usually engaged in activities such as setting up water supplies, clinics, schools, etc. They are mostly organized to construct these facilities rather than to manage and maintain them after their completion, though this can also be the case.

84. The types of self-help groups also include those which were instigated by the government, but also those which are completely autonomous from outside intervention, with other groups falling somewhere in between these two extremes. Self-help groups often get outside assistance at the outset of their activities, but are then expected to sustain their work on their own. Aid to self-help groups may come from the government, but is also common from national and international donor agencies.

85. Government preferences might influence the type of self-help organization which is used, thus favouring not the small farmer but a larger productive grouping. This can easily happen if the government is more oriented toward increasing productivity than toward helping he poor small farmers.

86. In the case of government involvement, it is often based on the provision of matching fund which provides financial resources proportional to the local input, usually in terms of labour.[40] Self-help, thus, can be a way of utilizing labour which otherwise might be idle.

87. The reason for setting up a self-help group is often that the government or local administration lacks financial and material resources. An approach to development which involves the participation of the intended beneficiaries and their resources, meagre as they may be, rather than seeing the rural people a passive recipients, thus is an attractive proposition.

88. Self-help associations are a means of providing popular participation by the rural people who are to benefit from the activities of the association. There is, however, a danger that the group is dominated by local leaders who decide what the needs should be. Here, the democratization of the local administrative structure is a vital ingredient in ensuring that the needs are heeded and the group is not made a vehicle for a certain vocal and powerful minority.[41]

89. In order to achieve these ends, it is necessary to have people who have the requisite skills to negotiate, to advocate their position, articulate their needs and formulate plans. This may be a stumbling block in the advancement of self-help associations, because the required leadership is not always readily available. There is then the danger that if the desires are not articulated, schemes imposed from outside or from the local elite may be adopted. This would increase the likelihood that projects which are not directly relevant to the immediate needs of the majority of the local people are initiated.

90. Tasks which are imposed by the government are of course not 'voluntary' or 'self-generated', and may meet with a certain resentment, resistance or lack of enthusiasm on the part of the intended beneficiaries. It is, therefore, a prerequisite for the success of the self-help approach that the local people are allowed to formulate their needs and to implement them under their own leadership, with or without outside assistance as the case may be.

91. The success of self-help depends greatly on the power structure of the community concerned, and the resources that are generated may not necessarily benefit the most underprivileged, which usually means the majority of the rural people. It has been noted that the beneficiaries of self-help have often been those who already are relatively well-to-do. There is a danger that the less privileged do not benefit as much from a self-help scheme as those who already had the resources and skills to initiate a self-help scheme, which furthermore suited their own needs.

92. One of the main dangers facing self-help schemes is lack of enthusiasm if the outside involvement is too heavy. Efficiency might take priority over helping alleviate basic needs and thus the poorest. Another danger is the use of the self-help group for political aims.

93. A further risk that the less privileged groups, in which one should include for example women, put in proportionately more work into the group's activities than the benefits which actually accrue to them, and/or that the benefits go to another group rather than themselves.

94. Here, the importance of allowing the small farmers and other beneficiaries to organize themselves and to decide on their priorities must be emphasized. This approach is essential for the long-term success of a self-help scheme. It might be an ad-hoc grouping or one that eventually becomes permanent, but the crucial element is the involvement of the local small farmers in the formulation and articulation of their needs.

95. This is particularly true because a vital element in the success of a self-help group is the degree of satisfaction achieved by it. This in turn, depends on the perception of the extent to which the beneficiaries' needs and goals have been fulfilled. Here one encounters the difficulty of determining whether there was too much or too little outside, i.e., government or donor support, and whether it was of the right kind. For example, a donor might provide technical assistance which does the required job, but in the end turns

out not to have been well-suited because it cannot be sustained due to resource constraints once the donor's involvement has ceased.

96. Examples of self-help groups include the Harambee movement in Kenya, Nnoboa groups in Ghana, Six-S in Burkina Faso, ORAP in Zimbabwe and ADRI in Rwanda.

97. The Six-S (Se servir de la saison sèche en savanne et au Sahel) project was started in 1974 in Burkina Faso. Its aim was to take advantage of the long dry period from October to May to undertake a series of self-help social and economic activities to improve the living standards of the rural population. "One feature of this initiative was reliance on traditional Naam groups of mutual help and co-operation to promote a large-scale, self-help movement with numbers running into 200,000 and extension into their Sahelian countries such as Mali, Mauritania and Senegal."[42]

98. The groups undertake income-generating, community and social activities. Income-generating activities include vegetable gardening, stock farming, handicraft, millet mills, cereal banks, and production and sale of horse carts. Community activities are, for example, construction of water dams and dikes, anti-erosion works, wells, afforestation schemes, etc. Social projects include rural pharmacies, primary health care, schools, theatre, etc. "Six-S provides credit to partially support such projects. Activities of communal benefit are subsidized through limited cash remuneration and food for work and free supply of the needed equipment. In turn, Six-S gets funds from member groups' contributions and external donors. All Six-S groups have a savings fund built with member subscriptions and receipts from income-generating activities."[43]

99. The Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP) was started in 1981 by a group of people in Matabeleland in Zimbabwe. It encourages and supports autonomous organizations amongst rural people and enhances their ability to analyze their situation. It relies on traditional groups and practices of mutual help and co-operation. "The basic units are village groups which federate into 'umbrellas' and

higher up to associations and finally to the Advisory Board of ORAP."[44]

100. The groups undertake a variety of economic and social activities. Their skills and labour are combined with material and financial assistance from external donors through ORAP. The activities include carpentry, knitwear making, sewing, building, basketry, wood carving, livestock grazing, vegetable gardening, poultry-keeping, baking and grinding mills. Emphasis is also placed on training and education. ORAP also engages in food relief, improved food storage, improved water storage, irrigation, and the provision of immediate needs such as wells, latrines, improved kitchens, harvesting, etc.[45]

101. The Rwandan Action pour le développement rural intégré (ADRI) is an organization of peasant groups. It was started in 1979 to undertake 'animation' work with peasant women in the Kabaye district. The basis of organization was traditional groups of mutual help. Activities undertaken by the group include collective cultivation of cash crops, social forestry, grain storage, consumer stores, livestock rearing, furniture making, brick making, beer brewing and grain mills.[46]

102. "Harambee" means "let's work together" or "let's pull together" in Swahili and was first articulated in 1963 by President Jomo Kenyatta as an appeal to co-operation and self-organization in community development. "Through the Harambee movement, people's participation has taken root and has made a major contribution in the development process. There are in Kenya Harambee projects in almost all spheres of community life."[47] While Harambee self-help activities receive official support, they are outside official development programmes.

103. A Harambee project begins with a community identifying a need and organizing groups to meet it. These groups can have one target or a continuing programme of related targets. Usually, the Harambee groups are not formally registered as societies. They build schools, health dispensaries, cattle dips, roads, etc., but the emphasis now is on agricultural and water projects. The levels of Harambee activities

vary considerably among the provinces: they are higher where suitable land resources have favoured settlement and development efforts.

104. The people have a positive attitude to the Harambee philosophy for the following reasons:

"(i) The projects they initiated were theirs and directly affecting their felt needs. The people became more motivated to be self-reliant on the understanding that the government would support their efforts.

(ii) Because government's assistance was conditional to the people's own initiative, they felt the need and urgency to compete for the limited government resources through initiation of projects and participating in their implementation."[48]

105. The government could not always meet its share of the project costs, which made it necessary to institutionalize the initiation of Harambee projects. Therefore, Harambee activities after 1966 are co-ordinated and controlled by the government, but this has not stifled the faith put in the people in this approach to development.[49]

106. Varying analyses have been offered of the success or otherwise of the Harambee. "Different interpretations of the nature and scope of the Harambee movement have been forwarded by the relatively few scholars who have conducted research on this topic. Some authors stress the role of Harambee in fostering social cohesion and solidarity. Others recognize the links between Harambee and the traditional forms of communal work; they stress the important use of traditional groups for mobilizing and organizing the rural population. Harambee critics suggest that the rural poor's efforts in community self-help activities impoverish them for the benefit of the rural rich..."[50]

107. In Ghana, it was assumed that slow progress in development was due to the use of foreign types of organization, and as a result, the traditional Nnoboa system was revised. Nnoboa means "mutual

assistance in weeding" in the Akan language.[51] It signifies a form of pooling labour for mutual aid, which is usually temporary, disbanding when the task is completed, to be reformed when the next opportunity arises. "This contrasts with the conventional co-operative, which entails a permanent and continuous commitment on the part of its members and requires an institutional and bureaucratic apparatus to run."[52]

108. The Nnoboa system is used quite widely in Ghana in farming through labour-exchange and in social projects, e.g. feeder road construction, establishment of health posts, and schools. "It has proved to have the capacity to quickly mobilize collective action on community projects."[53]

109. The reasons for joining a Nnoboa group are:

"(a) labour pooling and exchange,
(b) to obtain credit,
(c) to organize marketing, and
(d) to obtain mechanized services."[54]

However, these expectations were not always fulfilled.

110. The Government of Ghana has outlined the Nnoboa system as follows:

"- The Nnoboa groups consist of at least ten members, initially engaging in farming;

- their landholding are to be continuous for the easy exchange of labour and services;

- assistance and technical services are provided by the Government;

- in each village, a Crop Association is formed, made up of all growers of the same crop;

- the Crop Association eventually will be registered with the Registrar of Co-operatives;

- the Nnoboa groups will be gradually developed into multi-purpose co-operative organizations, for marketing, housing and industrial activities."[55]

111. It is thus clear that the Nnoboa groups are to develop into co-operatives and might lose their initial temporary character and turn into more formalized organizations.

112. In Zambia, the self-help drive was initiated by President Kaunda in 1971. It was based on the traditional self-help system whereby people in the rural communities practiced reciprocal labour exchange for activities such as house building, bush clearing, etc. "Self-help housing groups are constituted of villages who come together voluntarily, organize themselves for the purpose of making bricks, burning them to build their houses, and if they have a surplus, it is sold to the government. The objective is to improve the standard of housing of rural people."[56]

113. "The available evidence shows that the moment the people agree to participate in such a venture, they are normally committed and will pursue their exercise to its logical conclusion. However, such projects have sometimes suffered from government failure to play its part fully..."[57] In this situation, the success of a project often hinged on the quality of the contacts the local population had with government officials, which resulted in an uneven distribution of funding.

114. Successful self-help schemes have been able to provide a form of social security system for its members in the form of collective savings for loans or consumption, as well as for emergency needs. Cereal banks have also be instituted by Six-S, ORAP and ADRI to increase food security. The provision of credit to members as individuals or as a group enables them to obtain raw materials, equipment, tools and agricultural inputs more easily.

115. The self-help schemes also increase incomes, production and employment by the pooling of labour and resources. Collective projects such as road construction; irrigation and water catchment schemes; soil conservation; mutual help in ploughing, harvesting and cultivation; reforestation; food storage; transport; marketing; purchase of inputs, etc., have been the basis for the success of such schemes. "Co-operation in pooling resources facilitated by institutional innovations inspired by traditional practices has been at the heart of gains achieved through these initiatives."[58]

116. An increase in productivity results in raised income for the group, which is due to the increased availability of the goods it produces. This increased availability makes it possible for poorer people in the rural areas to obtain them at reasonable prices.

117. The Six-S in Burkina Faso, ORAP in Zimbabwe and ADRI in Rwanda are examples of successful self-help organizations. Nevertheless, certain problems need to be addressed despite this success: "These are genuinely indigenous efforts aimed at building on the initiatives and resources of the people. However, insofar as they too have become dependent for much of their work on external donor funding, they have lost that degree of independence which is necessary for them to be self-reliant. Also, in the case of many of these locally initiated efforts, there is so much that centres around the charisma or strong leadership of one or two persons that the extent to which they are genuinely democratic must be seriously questioned. Furthermore, as recipients of donor funding, many of them become islands of relative privilege surrounded by a sea of poverty of the people not so well-organized or skilled to know how to secure donor funding."[59]

118. Further, common characteristics of self-help groups based on local initiatives such as the Harambee and Nnoboa groups are:

"- They have little or no institutional 'blue print';

- all members actively participate in decision-making and contribute labour and cash to the projects;

- they were built upon traditional forms of mutual aid;

- they strongly reinforce social cohesion;

- they foster local leadership in youths."[60]

119. In order that self-help groups actually practice popular participation, the following conditions must be met:

a) The real needs of the intended beneficiaries, especially the disadvantaged ones, must be met or at least attempted to be met;

b) Outsiders, i.e., government and donors must enable the people to be involved in the decision-making process from the outset and during the life-time of the groupings;

c) The technical and practical feasibility of schemes must be ensured, as well as their beneficial effect;

d) The objectives of the group must not be in conflict with national objectives;

e) The scheme must not favour the privileged segments of the local population to the detriment of the less privileged, nor must it be dominated by the better-off.[61]

TRADITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

120. African society has relied on communal action and, thus, had been organized along traditional lines even before the advent of more 'modern' types of associations. Communal organizations are the norm, and are usually based on a common geographic location, usually a village, or on common ethnicity, language, religion, etc.

121. These traditional groupings may be more effective in certain activities than new associations, since they are 'natural' organizations and well-established in society. Particularly if a threat from outside the community is perceived, the sense of belonging is very well developed, as is the sense of satisfaction with one's membership, so that effective community action can be initiated.

122. However, there are also possible drawbacks to traditional organizations. The leadership might be elitist, hereditary and treated too deferentially.[62] Participation in the sense of a democratic 'one man, one vote' may not be practiced, though there usually is scope for public debate and the airing of grievances. In this way, the proper functioning of the traditional way of doing things is to a high degree dependent on the traditional expectations held of the leadership.

123. Another danger is the excessive clinging to traditions and rejection of new methods and ideas. The rejection of persons from other groupings is also possible in extreme cases. The danger of alienating segments of the community, and of causing them to leave or to resign themselves to the situation rather than to attempt to change or improve matters is evident. This manifests itself for example in the exodus of young and able villagers to urban areas, which is partly the result of a desire to escape the constraints of traditional patterns of life.

124. Furthermore, governments might question the allegiances to the state if there is a conflict between the local community and the larger national interests. Modernization may weaken the traditional communal ties.

125. Nevertheless, despite these possible limitations, traditional organizations have an important role to play in the development efforts of the rural people. They are the forerunners of the other forms of organization and have important lessons to teach as far as the mobilization and motivation of the people is concerned. It is partly out of loyalty to the local leadership and because of the perception that the leader has the best interests of his community in mind that his decisions carry weight.

126. In Lesotho, for example, the traditional village assemblies, called Pitsos, continue to play an important role in the mobilization of the rural population to participate in the development efforts. Self-help groups, formed voluntarily by 20-25 members of a village assembly can register as a co-operative after prolonged training.[63]

127. Traditional groups perform a number of functions and activities, e.g.:

a) Economic functions: savings and credit schemes; production and marketing activities; craft-making; building of community facilities;

b) Social functions: self-training and education by the group; settlement of conflicts and maintenance of discipline; coverage of such social risks as old age, illness and death;

c) Cultural functions: educational, festive, sporting and theatrical activities.[64]

128. In Burkina Faso, the role of traditional rural groupings was well developed in the pre-colonial era. "Traditionally, solidarity was the basis of village life. What this meant is that all activities were based on mutual assistance. Such mutual assistance created and consolidated social relations. The colonial economic policy introduced new forms of organization aimed at better exploitation of resources. The post-colonial era was characterized by rapid deterioration of the living conditions of the rural people resulting in development actions being embarked upon. These actions which did not always conform to the traditional structures, led to the establishment of new organizations which were called: village groups, pre-co-operative groups, village associations and other forms of co-operatives."[65]

129. "The historical experience of the largest ethnic group in the country, the Mossi, in the organization of traditional associations, based on democratic and egalitarian participation of members, is a major asset in implementation of popular participation in the

country... The 'Naam' groups which are found throughout the country are a striking example of the economic achievements that can be made through such organization, for example, the promotion of small-scale domestic animal husbandry, drying and preservation of perishable foods, processing of raw materials into consumer goods, soap making, weaving and basket making, as well as social activities such as literacy programmes, training and information according to the needs of participants."[66]

130. As traditional organizations are often characterized as self-help groups, examples of these such as the Nnoboa in Ghana have already been given in the preceding section.

PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS

131. The role of peasant associations in rural areas is often to strengthen the position of peasants vis-a-vis the landowner in order to get assistance in land distribution. However, they can also be organizations imposed by the government as a means of carrying out land reforms and other policies.

132. To give an example, in Ethiopia, the basic organizational structure in the rural areas consists of the peasant associations created by the agrarian reform undertaken in 1974. The objectives of Peasant Associations are stated in the Public Ownership of Rural Lands Proclamation, Article 10, and Article 5 of the Peasants Associations Organization and Consolidation Proclamation. They are, inter alia, to:

(a) distribute, with solicited assistance of the government when necessary, land for farming;

(b) follow land use directives of the government;

(c) administer and conserve public property;

(d) build schools, clinics, etc. with the government's co-operation;

(e) undertake the villagization programmes;

(f) enable peasants to secure and safeguard their political, economic and social rights;

(g) enable the peasantry to administer itself.[67]

133. "As can be seen from the above objectives and powers granted to the Peasant Associations, there is no doubt as to their key role in the rural community. As non-participation in this key decision-making organ is bound to have major repercussions on the status and security of an individual or group of individuals, the rules regarding membership and holding of office are crucial.

134. Pursuant to the Rural Land Nationalization Proclamation, membership is open to 'any tenant, landless person, hired agricultural worker or landowner with less than ten hectares of land.' without differentiation of sex."[68]

135. Despite the potential advantages of membership in the Peasant Association described above, it is also clear that participation is not voluntary. This aspect could be a potential obstacle to the functioning of the organization. Furthermore, too much government involvement can lead to dependence, indifference and lack of initiative on the part of the members.

136. Another danger facing peasant associations is the lack of qualified leadership, making it relatively easy for them to fall victim to demagogues or other outside pressures. Here education of the members is vital because a strong leader could direct the organization towards fulfilling his own political aims rather than helping them achieve their own goals.

137. Richer farmers play a stronger role in peasant association than poorer ones. In some countries, farmer or peasant organizations are

granted monopoly status, becoming an extension of the government's policies rather than an autonomous body. Increased production with subsequent taxation might be required but no benefits reaped by the farmers despite their efforts.

138. To be truly participatory, a peasant association must:

a) be homogeneous in composition and interests;

b) not be dominated by outside forces, e.g., government-imposed regulations;

c) be self-governed;

d) have competent leadership;

e) have a legal basis for its existence;

f) provide education for farmers and peasants to enable them to participate in and understand the purpose of the organization;

g) be a co-operating partner, not an opponent of government; and

h) be free and independent in order to stem discontent.

RURAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

139. Much has been written on the status and role of women in rural Africa. They suffer from various handicaps and restrictions in comparison with men. Although legally they may be placed on an equal level with and be given the same rights as men, the actual practice often shows a different picture. It is generally men who dominate the world of politics, whether on a national or a local level, while women face various constraints which would prevent them

participating more fully in the decision-making process, whether they may be social, educational, cultural or institutional.

140. Women in rural areas of Africa usually have certain tasks which are traditionally theirs, and often are different from those of men. "While jobs such as slashing, burning, clearing and ploughing are mostly done by men, they are in places also done by women in addition to such typical 'female' jobs as planting and transplanting, sowing, weeding, hoeing, harvesting, threshing, grading and sorting, as well as feeding and tending animals, dairy cattle or draught animals. Often women are also responsible for food processing and storage, and the transportation of farm produce to collecting points."[69]

141. Often attempts at improving the lot of the rural farmer have resulted in providing the men with, for example, mechanized equipment while the women have experienced an even greater marginalization. They have also experienced a higher work load due to the migration of a high number of men to the urban areas, leaving the women behind to bear the double burden of producing both food crops, their traditional domain, as well as the cash crops, which usually are the men's responsibility. Furthermore, men tend to dominate the organizations which work on rural development and thus limit the participation of and opportunities for women. Women are further handicapped by their lack of educational opportunities relative to the male population, making it more difficult to assume leadership roles, at least in mixed or community-wide rural groupings.

142. Traditionally, rural women in Africa have formed groups to perform certain functions, whether it be to market their produce, make handicrafts or to work together in sharing the tasks of for example grinding and milling, beer brewing and house construction. They, however, did not have formalized and organized structures. "Women's groups are generally small voluntary village- or locality-based groups. They usually emerge out of felt needs, but currently some groups do emerge from the demonstration effect of successful groups that might be thriving within a locality. The main objective

of these groups has been identified as the need to improve their material conditions through self-help activities. Because of the need to improve their material well-being, several of them are involved in several income-generating collective action, like cash crop farming, poultry keeping, gardening, and such other activities which will generate disposable cash which then constitutes the ground fund from where they make cash payments periodically."[70]

143. It is not necessarily a handicap for women who want to organize themselves not to have had a formal education. Many groups can, and in fact do bypass the need for formal reading and arithmetical skills. Women who are organized to market their goods or to produce handicrafts can have a certain control over the retail market.

144. In some countries, the government sees the possibilities of using women's groups to further national development goals. The groups can be used to disseminate information on family planning, child care, nutrition, welfare, health and sanitation, etc. as long as they receive adequate support from the authorities.

145. In countries where the government depends on the support of women for its programmes, the legal, economic and other gains made by women have been significant. It is important that the women's groups do not arouse the opposition of the government in order not to lose the gains achieved. It is of prime importance the prejudices and obstacles which block the advancement of women are removed, and that facilities which cater to the needs of working women are established in order to enable women to participate more fully in the decision-making processes at all levels, from the local to the national.

146. Women in Burkina Faso are organized in groups such as the Association of Widows and Orphans of Burkina Faso, women's mutual assistance groups, women's community development associations and handicrafts co-operatives or in training or literacy campaigns through the rata-manégere co-operatives and the associations of Zabré women.[71] "In the rural areas where 90 per cent of the women live, there are several women's village groupings. The 'Naam' women's

group has nearly 90,000 members at present, distributed in several rural areas of the country. Out of a total of 162,015 members, women account for 55 per cent. The mode of operation of this group is modelled on that of the Moaga traditional associations characterized by democracy and equality. These groups were founded between 1966-67 by Mr. B.L. Ouedraogo (recently awarded the Hunger Project Prize for his efforts) who tried to reactivate this traditional structure by adapting it to current development needs."[72] These groups admit both men and women and are based on a democratic and participatory philosophy.

147. The Association Vive la paysanne (AVLP) in Burkina Faso is a peasant association founded in 1979 by a group of rural youths. The AVLP undertakes varied activities in the advancement of women including literacy and general education programmes, installation of mills, building of carts for transporting water, improved homes, cheap catering services, gathering of sweet almonds, excursions and visits to other groups. These activities are carried out together with men, who are concerned about the advancement of their families. "However, certain traditional obstacles still impede the effectiveness of the actions taken and erode the expected results."[73] "In Burkina Faso, the problem is not one of the integration of women in development, in the sense indicated by some authors, but rather a question of technology transfer, access to available funds, training of women and promotion of viable autonomous structures such as women's groups and co-operatives."[74]

148. Women in Kenya started to organize themselves in more formal development-oriented groups after independence and with the initiation of the Harambee philosophy. The leadership of women's groups was not interfered with by the government before 1974. The groups are based on the Harambee philosophy of self-help and self-reliance. They are different from other Harambee groups in that they tend to have a permanent tenure and are multi-purpose. Since 1976 all women's group must have a minimum of 25 members and should be involved in at least one resource-generating activity. "Secondly, all group finances can only be expended with the knowledge and consent of the government official from the women's bureau of the Ministry

of Culture and Social Affairs stationed within the locality... As if to reciprocate for its intervention, the government has institutionalized women's groups' participation in public affairs, especially in the planning of Harambee projects."[75]

WOMEN IN RURAL CO-OPERATIVES

149. The formation of co-operatives is one way in which women can organize themselves in order to promote their own development and that of the community. Since the roles and functions of rural co-operatives are discussed elsewhere in this publication, only those aspects which relate to women are mentioned here. Women can either found their own co-operative society or join already established societies, which however, more often than not are dominated by men. An overview of the situation in the region is given at the end of this section.

150. It is important that women in co-operatives having both male and female members are provided with the services they require, otherwise there is no reason for them to participate. Women have often been restricted in their access to co-operatives for traditional reasons, such as their inability to attend meetings, lower level of education, lack of time, differing responsibilities, etc. However, there is no evidence that the basic characteristics of a rural co-operative cannot be equally beneficial to women as it is to men.

151. The effect on co-operative activities by women's participation and the obstacles which need to be overcome in order to ensure their full participation has been eloquently outlined in the following statement: "It is normal that internal procedures, practices and methods in co-operatives be looked over and revised as necessary in the light of changing membership compositions. In connection with fuller participation by farming women, co-operatives need to review such internal organizational matters as the timing and location of meetings. The different work schedules of women and men (the farmers' household duties as well as farm work) and the distances

which have to be travelled have to be considered in determining these matters. These considerations may also bring up the question of providing collective facilities to help resolve such problems. Both the agendas and conduct of meetings may have to be revised, the first to make them attractive to women as well as men, the second to streamline proceedings for those who are short of time. Attention to such matters as these facilitate women's participation in the decision making. In the matter of elections for officers and committees, there may be a case for regulatory or by-law provisions to ensure minimum representation of women members."[76]

152. Nigeria is a country which has co-operatives run by women, although they are a relatively new development. There are both registered and unregistered women's co-operatives. They provide thrift, credit, labour, marketing of mainly agricultural produce, food production and savings. "Co-operatives are a suitable organizational framework for accelerated rural development and are useful instruments for the mobilization and sensitization of women. Women all over the country embraced the idea of co-operative formation because they realized its importance in increasing their credit-worthiness and placing them in a position of strength to support income-generating activities out of their pooled resources."[77]

153. The conditions for admittance into a women's co-operative are: residence in the area, good character, and a minimum age of 18 years. Membership is voluntary and can be withdrawn by the member, or is withdrawn due to change of residence, termination or expulsion, insanity or death. There are written rules and bye-laws. General meetings are held annually, and committee meetings when necessary. Constraints to their functioning include inadequate funds, lack of co-operation, low membership, and lack of expertise.

154. The motivation for joining include: improved welfare, better living conditions, 'following the Joneses', savings, thrift and credit facilities, marketing facilities, higher income, and social prestige.[78] "The income generated and the power experienced as a result of organized group action are likely to give rural women self-confidence and the means to control their own lives, which have, in most cases,

been dominated by local power structures and male family members."[79]

155. The following is an overview of women's role in co-operatives in some African countries:

> Egypt: "Membership is virtually a prerogative of men. There is no legal bar to women's admission to co-operatives, but custom and tradition have not encouraged them to join."
>
> Cameroon: "The members of the general agricultural co-operatives are men. However, in 1970, under the initiative of the Organization of the Women's National Union of Cameroon and under the supervision of the Department of Co-operatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, women were organized in co-operative groups in different departments... Their main activity was marketing the palm-oil collected from the members of the groups or bought from larger producers and resold. With the income, household and food products were bought and sold at low price to the members... Later the groups engaged in other activities such as consumer, credit, handicraft and agriculture. Some agricultural groups worked group plantations, sold the products and used the money to improve their community services. Other co-operative members worked as labourers during the planting and harvesting seasons in individual plantations to make some additional income for family needs."
>
> Ghana: "No agricultural co-operatives with women-only members have been noted, but many of the food production co-operatives have female members. Among such co-operatives, one-third of the total membership were women, with wide variation from group to group (1976). In the produce marketing co-operatives of the Northern Region, however, the women were not integrated. Women were members of the 200 or so credit unions located in rural areas, but were said in many cases not to avail themselves of this facility for obtaining credits."

Kenya: "Women's participation in agricultural co-operatives has been little marked. In these co-operatives, of which a large proportion are for cash-crop marketing, land-holding has been a prime criterion for membership. Women were reported to be much more prominent in thrift and credit co-operatives."

Lesotho: "In 1978, the Government of Lesotho established an open policy to mobilize rural women for village producer co-operatives. Several active primary co-operative societies were developed: thrift and credit, agricultural and marketing, handicrafts, consumer, poultry, with a membership from 5 to 50 women. In the two most frequent types, thrift and credit, 80 per cent of the members are women, but they are not well represented in the Committees nor in the Board of Directors."

Swaziland: "With the introduction of co-operatives, women became the majority membership of the co-operatives: the consumer co-operative of Mahamba with 76 members; credit, agriculture and handicrafts co-operatives with 20 to 50 members. The co-operative development has shown an impact in supplying farm inputs, marketing of farm products and providing credit. The education programme within the co-operative has been extensive: home economics, handicrafts, nutrition, health."

Nigeria: "A survey conducted for FAO in 1980 concluded that the overall involvement of rural women in co-operatives was low, but gave evidence of much higher participation in some co-operatives. A sample of 39 co-operatives in three states showed an overall total of 51.9 per cent female membership, with 70.3 per cent in the group farming, 55 per cent in the thrift and credit, and 16.6 per cent in the marketing co-operatives..."

Senegal: "Membership consists mostly of family heads although in principle it is open to all rural people irrespective of sex."

Uganda: "Those women who were members were mainly unmarried females or widows with independent property, or

married women who became members with their husbands' consent."

Zaire: "No discrimination exists about admitting women as such to membership of co-operatives. Women are fairly well represented in the credit unions, but in the agricultural co-operatives they lag behind in membership and influence. Those women who do join are said to have the same rights as men."

Zambia: "The co-operatives are mainly agricultural and by custom it is generally the men who are members."[80]

RURAL YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

156. Youth are a vital component of any development strategy. They represent the energy needed to work in rural areas, and will be the future leaders who, in turn, will make policy decisions. Unfortunately, the rural youth is also hit by high un- and underemployment rates, which contribute to their exodus to urban areas in search of a livelihood, either permanently or seasonally. This means that the incorporation of youth in organizations which are designed to improve the lot of the rural population and which can provide employment would be vital in providing an opportunity to keep the youth in the rural areas and thus stemming the exodus. The limited opportunities and prospects in rural areas, which are to a large part responsible for this exodus, must be enhanced to provide more incentive to stay on the land and give them more hope for the future.

157. In order to channel their energies in a useful way, rural youth organizations can play an important role in providing meaningful and gainful activities to young people. There are two basic types of youth organization, the government- or party-sponsored ones and those which are independent.

158. The organizations sponsored by the government or party may be a means of controlling and indoctrinating youth with values which make them loyal to the powers-that-be. On the other hand, the organizations can provide a sense of belonging and satisfaction, as well as meaningful activities such as education, sports and possibly employment in, for example, rural mobilization campaigns.

159. The independent youth organizations may have been formed by youth for non-political or oppositional purposes, or merely due to a certain common interest, whether it be to start an income-generating activity or simply to gather for social or sporting purposes. In the Gambia, for example, youth groups are organized in a national youth council which represents their interests vis-à-vis the Government. The role of independent youth organizations is dependent on the attitude of the authorities toward them. This can range from encouragement, indifference, mere tolerance or suppression. It must be said that any enlightened government has to take the youth organizations into account when formulating development strategies.

160. Another form of youth organization is the traditional type, which is to say that it is often the young people of a community who are organized to perform certain tasks which are traditionally assigned to people of a certain age. These groups form when there is a need for e.g. work requiring muscle power, or protective activities. They play an important role in passing on social values to youth and also provide a way of employing them in useful activities and enabling them to make useful contributions to society.

161. It is vital to keep in mind the importance of youth for the development process of a country, both in terms of providing employment opportunities and education, and to prevent their migration from rural to urban areas. It is necessary to provide means of organizing and employing youth in rural areas to give them a reason for staying in rather than leaving their birthplace.

RURAL TRADE UNIONS

162. It is generally acknowledged that, compared to the developed part of the world, trade unions are quite weak and restricted in the developing world, including Africa. Furthermore, trade unions in the region tend to be based in urban rather than rural areas. Although their functions are similar to trade unions in industrialized countries, the realities of the region are quite different from those of the developed world.

163. Trade unions in Africa face the primary constraint that the number of wage earners in the formal sector is very low in comparison to developed countries, and these are usually found in urban or industrialized areas, not in the rural parts of the country. Another restriction to the development of trade unions is the lack of class consciousness among the employees[81] because the ties to their rural roots are still strong. Due to high unemployment rates and the consequent danger of losing one's job, workers also might prefer to chose a less confrontational approach to solving their problems.

164. Trade unions for rural workers may be affiliated to urban trade unions out of the need to have a stronger voice in articulating their demands, but also because a country's law might require that a trade union has to register with a central umbrella organization which is located in an urban centre and which may be affiliated to and/or led by the government. This severely limits the scope for action by a trade union on behalf of its members, who often are already disadvantaged by lack of leadership skills, meagre resources and other constraints.

165. As is the case with other organizations, competent, sensitive and dedicated leadership is essential for the efficient working of a trade union. Furthermore, government policy determines the role of the union and its strength or weakness as a true representative of the needs of its members and as a bargaining partner. The success of a trade union in improving working conditions of its members and in ensuring the provision of essential goods and services will depend on

the attitude which the government takes toward it. Often, trade unions of the region do not enjoy the freedoms of their counterparts in the more developed countries.

166. In the case of Ghana, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) comprises 17 national unions, one of which is the General Agricultural Workers' Union. The TUC is based in the urban areas and oriented towards urban unions, though it has started co-operative development in order to provide credit to workers.[82]

167. The following sums up the present situation in the region: "In none of the countries [Ghana, Kenya, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania] studied are the trade unions rural based. Generally they operate in urban areas and in the non-agricultural sectors of the economy.

168. This is particularly the case in Kenya, where only two unions in agriculture organized 38,000 rural workers. The organizations have severe administrative and leadership problems.

169. Also the Trade Unions in Cameroon are concentrated in urban areas, and rural unions do not exist."[83]

CREDIT INSTITUTIONS

170. The traditional providers of credit to the rural population are the money-lenders. Although they are easily accessible, they generally charge exorbitant interest rates on loans, which can lead to long-term repayment problems and permanent indebtedness for those who avail themselves of their services. The poorest of the poor, who are in the greatest need of credit in order to improve their standard of living, are the ones who suffer the most from the practices of the traditional money lenders.

171. In order to find an alternative means of access to credit, other approaches have been tried. The provision of credit to members is an important function of rural co-operatives and has been mentioned in

the section on co-operatives. Some co-operatives are established solely for the purpose of providing savings and credit facilities. Savings and credit co-operatives are a system in which "all the component parts endeavour to work together at sustaining the welfare of each member. In fact, the vital importance of savings is a key element of the people's bank system which makes members to pool their own capital through savings, in contrast to what happens with a traditional bank."[84]

172. In Cameroon, savings and credit co-operatives such as the Caisses populaires have been formed. These informal associations overcome the restrictions experienced by various social groups in obtaining loans from the formal banking system. Some of these co-operatives have a membership which is limited to a certain category of people, such as the members of a village or traders. "The co-operatives may mobilize capital through specific methods either by payment of a lump sum (people's bank) or by regular deposit (mutual credit association) or yet again, through the subsidies of such development agencies as local NGOs formed by grass-roots people and the majority of whose loans go for the purchase of equipment and goods and for trading activities."[85]

173. These savings and credit co-operatives eliminate the financial middle-men and thus have been able to utilize substantial volumes of savings which are redistributed as small loans. These loans in turn make it possible to achieve a higher rate of productivity, to purchase necessary inputs or to open new business ventures. Farmers who take advantage of these loans are able to buy improved seeds, fertilizer and new equipment. This helps to bring about substantial improvements in their standard of living and productivity.

174. In Cameroon, the savings and credit co-operatives have been able to provide members of people's banks with training for trainers in order to spread the know-how. "The people's bank also acts as a co-operative which provides a place to save and deposit regular savings that are managed independently in village and other communities. Once the interest has been collected, the surplus is distributed to members in the form of a 6 per cent per year rate of

dividend. Obviously, the money collected is deposited in a commercial bank, while leaving the people's bank a liquidity ratio of 25 per cent in ready money."[86]

175. In Rwanda, dissatisfaction with the Banque populaire induced peasant groups to form their own savings and credit society called Caisse de solidarité (Solidarity Bank). Their funds serve both as a guarantee to donors and to generate collective interest for the repayment of loans by each group. "Several groups have evolved into multi-purpose co-operatives covering farming, marketing, artisan production and collective savings schemes. In one area, several groups have come together to form a fund with contributions from peasants, particularly at harvest time, in cash or kind. The fund serves as a social security scheme for members covering death, fire, natural disasters, accident, sickness and finance of secondary education."[87]

176. With access to credit, more risks can be taken to start new projects to improve the quality of life and to buy, for example, new seeds or equipment. The savings which were previously hidden away become productive for the good of the whole community. "The people's banking system can, therefore, stem the syphoning of rural resources or funds from less economically active areas to the principal towns or monetary centres of the country. When the people's bank operates properly, this could contribute to improving the quality of life in those areas and slowing down, if not actually reducing, rural-urban drift."[88]

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

177. There is now an emerging consensus that rural development strategies can only be successful if the grass-roots organizations of the rural people themselves are actively involved at all stages of the process. This approach is consistent with the recommendations made by the World Conference on agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) held in Rome in 1979. WCARRD, inter alia, considered

support and promotion of people's organizations, together with gainful employment, as the most effective means of ensuring the participation of the rural people in these organizations.[89] Without participation in development by the grass-roots, all efforts to introduce new technologies and resources, as well as to provide more goods and services will result in their inadequate utilization and inequitable distribution.

178. In many cases, the impetus to form a grass-roots organization comes from non-governmental organizations, government ministries, development banks and corporations, with the catalytic role either being played by indigenous activities or by foreign agencies. Financial and technical support is received from national sources as well as from international donor agencies and other bodies.

179. The local rural organizations often start as a response to a particular problem whose solution would lead to poverty alleviation and more social justice, and which requires the co-operation and common effort of a group of people to be tackled. The type of problem which starts the movement toward group formation can be an adult literacy project, or primary health care, credit, employment, reforestation or irrigation scheme. The first step is that the people are aware of their situation and are able to investigate and analyze it. Then a group can be established to consider the possibilities of action and on this basis to take the necessary measures which lead to the alleviation or elimination of the problem.

180. Often, the impetus for group formation comes from outside the community, and is provided by either a government agency or non-governmental organization. If a community seems to lack the motivation to form a local group, the outside agency needs to find ways to motivate the rural population. One way is to use animators who need to be knowledgeable about and sensitive to the aspirations of the rural community. At the same time the animator must not give the impression of imposing an alien idea on the rural people. A successful animator is, therefore, somebody who is wise enough to be able to tread the thin line between demonstrating beneficial new

approaches to rural development and giving the rural community the feeling that it is their own project.

181. Another effective way to motivate people is to let them visit a successful project area and see for themselves and discuss with the participants in the project. This enables them to exchange ideas and to gain new knowledge which otherwise would be difficult to obtain and also difficult for an animator to impart.[90] "The pioneer groups must be looked upon as constituting a social vanguard whose impact radiates through the neighbouring communities. The members assist the fellow poor to form their own groups. This may happen at the initiative of the members of the established groups or at the request of non-members who spontaneously wish to emulate their efforts... This is perhaps the most important explanation of the rapid expansion of the membership of many of these organizations. Even where the entire set of activities is not replicated, some aspects of their valuable experiences are quickly disseminated to the neighbouring communities. Indeed the 'bush telegraph' is the most effective vehicle of transmission of new ideas, techniques and practices among the peasantry and rural workers."[91]

182. The people themselves must be encouraged to take the initiative. This is essential from the first steps to the full maturation of their organization. An outsider can act as a catalyst to help the people to analyze their situation and find solutions to their problems, but the running of the organization must be left to the people themselves.

183. The rural people, despite the advantages of organizing for development, face numerous obstacles and constraints to the success of their organizations.

184. The following is a list of problems encountered by rural organizations which need to be taken into consideration and if possible overcome to enable truly participaroty development by the rural people as well as for the rural people:

1. Development organizations do not deal specifically with the rural poor, but usually with the farmers in general;

2. Better-off farmers benefit more than poorer farmers because of the structure of the organizations they belong to. It is falsely assumed that these organizational structures will benefit both the richer and the poorer farmers;

3. Credit to the poor is still a problem, and traditional money-lenders still play an important role in the rural economy;

4. Rural organizations are often started by government bodies rather than local groups;

5. Registration procedures can be too complex and bureaucratic;

6. Land ownership is often a requirement for membership;

7. Women and youth are often, de facto, excluded from rural organizations:

8. Leadership is often either imposed from outside or in the hands of politically well-connected individuals;

9. Education for members is inadequate, as is their involvement in management;

10. Qualified staff is often lacking;

11. Rural organizations are often seen merely as tools for implementing government policies;

12. The organizations are more interested in increasing production than in improving the living conditions for poor farmers;

13. Sometimes, there is no co-ordination between the agencies concerned with rural organizations;

14. Membership requirements sometimes favour better-off people with certain necessary skills or resources;

15. There is a danger that rural organizations will be outlawed if they challenge the existing power structure;

16. Although the legal freedom of association may exist on paper, in practice there is no enforcement, nor adequate safeguards or appeal mechanisms;

17. Urban bias in development and lack of resources for rural development;

18. Legislative obstacles including restraints on the freedom of association;

19. Administrative obstacles such as over-centralized bureaucracies;

20. Diversity of interests and loyalties, heterogeneity;

21. Distrust of authorities and indifference or apathy towards them;

22. Geographic distance both within the rural area and between rural and urban areas;

23. Low levels of education;

24. The unwillingness of the outside agencies to practice true partnership with the rural people.[92]

185. Nevertheless, the formation of participatory rural groups has to be seen as a first and vital step toward development and popular participation, two concepts which go hand in hand.

186. Having indicated the problems encountered by rural organizations, it is imperative to note both the advantages which these organizations can bring, and possible ways of overcoming the obstacles to their success in bringing about positive changes.

187. The main reason for setting up an organization is that it enhances the collective power of its members to bring about changes in their situation. Through the cohesive pooling of their strengths, the members can advocate, preserve and promote their interests in an organized manner. Membership in a rural organization which is working for the common good of its members and their community brings about numerous benefits which cannot be achieved by individual effort. The advantages of organized participatory rural development are:

1. Group cohesion and sense of solidarity;
2. Self-management through a self-chosen structure;
3. Increased ability to analyze and discuss problems and their possible solutions, and to solve them;
4. Increased strength in front of government officials;
5. Increased ability to co-operate with other rural groups;
6. Building up of the managerial, organizational and technical capacities of the members;
7. Imparting of democratic values and attitudes, and encouraging discussions and debate;
8. Reduction or removal of the dependency mentality;
9. Encouragement of innovation and initiative;
10. Relief of the burden on governments to initiate and finance all development activities;

11. High efficiency and better use of resources;

12. Higher effectiveness in utilizing indigenous knowledge and skills;

13. Higher levels of productivity;

14. Higher success rate in problem solving;

15. Easier access by government agencies, non-governmental organizations and voluntary development organizations to the rural people;

16. Greater involvement of the rural disadvantaged; and

17. Demonstration effect which encourages other groups to emulate successful organizations.[93]

188. In order to provide the basis for the sustained success of a rural organization, certain criteria must be fulfilled:

(i) The membership of the organization should have homogeneous interests. If interests and goals are not held in common, there is the danger that the more affluent and powerful members would come to dominate the organization. Furthermore, disagreement on or diversity in economic interests can cause conflicts within the organization which would weaken it, endanger its democratic quality, and reduce mutual trust;

(ii) The leadership, membership, activities and rules of the organization should not be imposed from outside. Any imposition of management or activities from outside would again weaken or impair its participatory and democratic character, and can easily lead to counterproductive indifference and apathy among its members;

(iii) The structure of the organization should be participatory and democratic. This means that the leadership and rules are chosen on the basis of the expressed will of the members. It also means that open discussion, debate and consensus are encouraged and indeed form the basis for the decision-making process. This would prevent the imposition of any unpopular activities or measures by a vocal minority or from outside. In a society where democracy is still at an early stage of development, it is important that a grass-roots organization is able to demonstrate its value and benefits;

(iv) The organization should be independent from patronage or control by or reliance on an outside body, such as a government department or a non-governmental organization. If it is dependent, its ability to represent the interests of its membership is compromised. Also, it will not be able to undertake the activities which reflect the collective will of its members;

(v) The rural organization should subscribe to the principle of self-reliance. It should have the ability to mobilize funds internally in order to perform the functions it was constituted to perform. Outside assistance should be accepted as and when needed, but the organization should not let itself become dependent on outside financing in order not to compromise its ability to act as an independent body;

(vi) The size of the group should be small enough to be manageable at least in the initial stages. This ensures cohesion and flexibility, and makes it easier for the group to function in a democratic and participatory fashion. Rather than expanding the size of a group, a number of small groups can be started, which then are organized under an umbrella organization. These umbrella organizations can be an instrument for influencing regional and national policies;

(vii) There should be maximum flexibility as far as the type structure and functioning of the organization is concerned, within the participatory framework outlined above. The members themselves should discuss and decide on the structure of their organization. While a certain number of rules and principles are necessary for the organization to function efficiently, it is not imperative that, for example, the Rochdale principles of co-operative societies are followed to the letter. The organizational structure must be acceptable in the socio-cultural context in which it is to function.[94]

189. Once the foundations are sound, the organization can develop and flourish, given the right external conditions. According to van Heck, the indicators of group maturity and self-reliance are:

1. regular meetings with active participation of all group members;
2. savings accumulated and less dependence on credit;
3. self-sustenance through food production;
4. joint preparation of group production plans;
5. ability to handle inputs and supplies;
6. ability to market the produce profitably;
7. adequate profits and just distribution of these among the group members;
8. effective record keeping;
9. effective links with line agencies and NGOs;

10. involvement in social activities, e.g. literacy classes, home management, contributions to community development works, etc.

11. number of activities successfully undertaken;

12. more women and youth participation; and

13. rotation of leadership."[95]

190. The role of governments is vital to the success of rural organizations. This is emphasized in, inter alia, AAF-SAP which states: "The key role of the government... will embrace the creation of an enabling environment and institution building for effective implementation and vigorous support for grassroots initiatives. On the other hand, democratization and popular participation will encourage the people to increase their development effort and to accept whatever sacrifices that may be implied by the programmes, thereby consolidating and deepening the process for national self-reliance."[96]

191. The creation of an enabling environment by the government is crucial to the success of participatory organizations. It is too often the case that the rural population views the government as responsible for all or most aspects of development because the rural people have not had a sufficiently loud voice in expressing their preferences and needs. This can, in the worst case, lead to complete reliance on outside agencies or indifference toward them based on poor experiences in the past. "Peasants are a calculating group who will participate only when the programme in question promises some benefits for them. They are intensely aware of their subordinate positions in relationship to other groups, especially the bureaucratic class. Owing to their relative powerlessness in their societies, peasants have, as much as possible, shunned participation in unstable societal institutions in which they could suffer from exploitation of those above them on the social ladder."[97]

192. Taking the above into account, it is imperative that governments realize that no development which involves changes in the social and economic structures can be successful without the involvement of the rural people[98]. Certain conditions are necessary for development to take off the ground, and one of the most important is the existence of a democratic environment, based on grass-roots democratic organizations which lead to larger-scale participation in national affairs. This implies a decentralization of political and economic power.

193. The relationship between governments and the rural participatory organizations needs to be clearly defined and given a legal and enforceable grounding. Legal and institutional barriers need to be removed in order for people to be able to form organizations of their own choice. "Among others, this would involve:

1. ratification and enforcement of ILO Convention Nos. 87 and 141 and Recommendation No. 149 on the role of rural workers' organizations in economic and social development;

2. relaxing complicated formal requirements of organization and registrations of small, local organizations;

3. easing collateral and repayment terms for small loans and other contracts with mutual guarantee groups."[99]

194. To summarize and re-emphasize the information presented in this manual, successful organizations in general need:

a) to be independent of government intervention to a high degree, if not completely;

b) to be democratic and participatory, not exclusive to an elite group;

c) to be able to motivate members and solicit new members;

d) to be able to give members more benefits than they would have received if they had been on their own;

e) to take into account the actual needs of the people;

f) to be oriented towards the needs of the majority of the rural people, which means the poorest members;

g) to ensure that the quality of the leadership is suitable for the aims of the organization, as this is directly proportional to the success of the organization; and

h) not to engage in activities which are contrary to national development aims and policies.

195. Finally, as food for thought, here are the words of a Cameroonian scholar on the subject of popular participation in development: "Allowing that the failure of development may have been caused in part by not involving the broad masses in the search for development, it could hardly be maintained that had the contrary been done, different results would have been achieved. Nothing indicates in one way or the other that this would have been the case. It can, therefore, safely be said as Pascal ventured (with African salt and pepper added) that even if the involvement of people would not necessarily lead to development, they should nevertheless participate because then, at least, they stand to gain in dignity and responsibility."[100]

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